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C O N F I D E N T I A L HAVANA 000515

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/02/2013  
TAGS: PREL CU  
SUBJECT: MINREX LAUNCHES NEW ATTACK ON USINT ACTIVITY

Classified By: COM Michael E. Parmly for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) The Communist Party daily Granma ran a full page statement from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MINREX) in its July 2, edition lambasting USINT's activities as being illegal and contrary to accepted practice for diplomatic missions and personnel in Cuba. See full translated text in paragraph 6.

¶2. (C) We first checked with our LCN staff members to take their temperature, two lines of thought emerged:

-- The GOC is completely frustrated with the activities and operations of USINT, including our migration programs. The GOC is very concerned with the "growing desperation" of the public; as the &reforms8 are not having their desired effect. The GOC has little hope that the Migration Accords will change in the near future and is obsessed with demographic trends, the flight of young people (the elimination of the 'tarjeta blanca' exit permit has been completely ruled out). Also a source of deep concern is Spain's program to grant citizenship to grandchildren of Spanish citizens, to be implemented in 2009. The GOC might make the calculation that a migration crisis with the U.S. would be to its advantage.

-- It is a warning to the dissidents primarily; secondarily to USINT. The government is getting ready to make arrests. Timing is connected to our 4th of July event.

¶3. (C) We have started to hear from some of our contacts. Father Jose Conrado, an activist priest in Santiago, called the COM the morning the statement appeared to comment on it and to assure us that he would attend the July 4 event at the COM residence. Marta Beatriz Roque and Vladimiro Roca plan to visit with us in the afternoon of July 2.

¶4. (C) COMMENT: This latest statement from MINREX has a more ominous tone than the one that accompanied the three-day blast against USINT in late May. Except for the provision of funding, material and planning, most of the "charges" listed are accurate. We are not entirely sure why MINREX issued this strong statement at this time. We see this as a final shot at outgoing COM Parmly and/or a warning shot across the bow of incoming COM Farrar. It's also an attempt to lower attendance at our annual 4th of July reception, which as of today could attract as many as 900 people (out of 1,800 invited). The GOC is frustrated that the May anti-USINT exercise did not result in any lessening of our activities. After initial hesitation, many dissidents seem to be getting back to normal activity, including contacts with USINT, albeit under greater scrutiny and harassment.

¶5. (C) Comments continued: Thinking more speculatively, it also shows a sign of fear that Cuba is at a critical juncture. The regime wants to tamp down dissident activity as much as possible. Whatever the reason, the tone implies that the GOC is prepared to take measures if USINT does not cease immediately all of its contacts with dissidents and civil society groups. We expect to see a ratcheting up of restrictions on visa issuance, or even the PNGing of selected

USINT officers. We do not plan, nor would we recommend, any scaling back of our normal activities. Further, we believe that our public response, as it was in May, should be that we do not discuss bilateral relations via the press. End of comments.

16. (U) OSC Translated Text:

Begin text:

Cuba: Foreign Ministry Denounces USINT 'Provocations,' Issues Warning: 02 July 2008

This escalation constitutes the most recent confirmation of the desperation felt by the US Administration which, frustrated by the repeated failure of its policy of isolation against Cuba, is intensifying its provocations and subversion.

The Foreign Ministry denounces, once again, the illegal actions of the US Interests Section that flagrantly violate not only the bilateral agreement that gave rise to the establishment of that office, but also Cuban laws and the international norms contained in the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations of 1961, of which the United States is a member.

The Ministry accuses the US Government of planning and encouraging this and other counterrevolutionary provocations, which constitute an intrinsic part of its policy of subversion and strategy to overthrow the Cuban Revolution.

The Government of Cuba summons the US Government to answer to these facts, and demands the USINT put a definitive end to meddling activities to encourage, organize, lead, finance and monitor the internal counterrevolution.

The Cuban Government clearly reiterates that it will not tolerate the continuation of these provocations and illegal actions instigated by the US Administration through its diplomatic officials in Havana, and holds the US Government responsible for the consequences that may result from its answer. End text.

Parmly  
PARMLY